



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")  
April 2022

### Mid-Atlantic and Virginia Ocean Planning

**THE PROBLEM:** In 2009 the five states of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey and New York formed the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) as a 5 state Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation. In 2010 under Presidential Executive Order 13547 regional ocean planning bodies were called for to develop regional ocean plans. These "RPB's included representatives from Federal agencies, States, Federally-recognized Tribes and the regional Fishery Management Councils. In 2013, the Mid-Atlantic RPB was formed and by 2016 it had developed a Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan. The plan was submitted to and approved by the National Ocean Council in December 2016. In 2018 Executive Order 13840 revoked the previous EO that created Regional Ocean Planning Bodies. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body was dissolved. At that time, the Virginia CZM Program Manager was one year into her two year term as the State representative on the 3 member (State, Federal, Tribal) RPB Steering Committee.



**THE FIXES:** In 2018 the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean agreed to create a new regional body in order to invite Federal agencies, Federally-recognized Tribes and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council back to the table to continue working on regional ocean planning. The Virginia CZM Manager, as Chair of the group to be formed, hosted a meeting in Richmond to discuss development of the new group. All agreed to move ahead and in 2019 all entities were formally invited to join MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO). Although Federal agencies would no longer bound to implement the actions in the 2016 Mid-



— The Fourth Annual —  
**MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN FORUM**

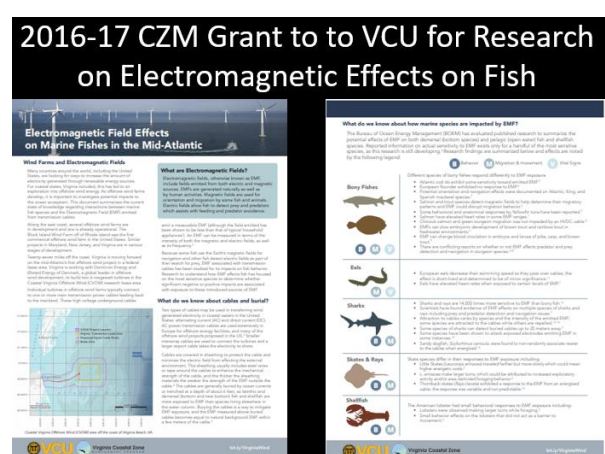
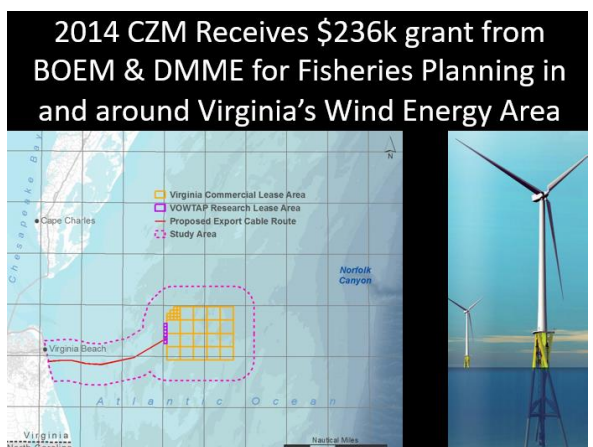
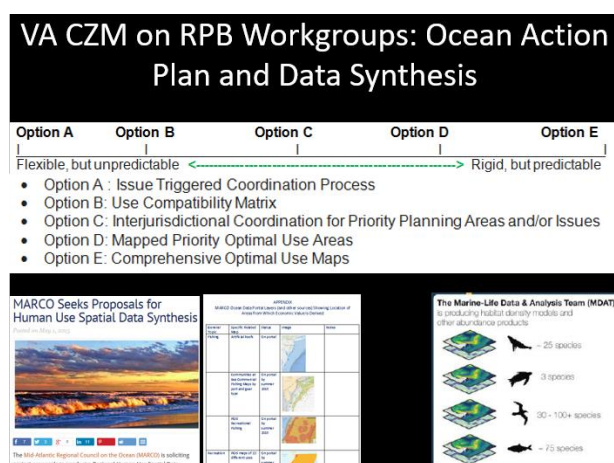
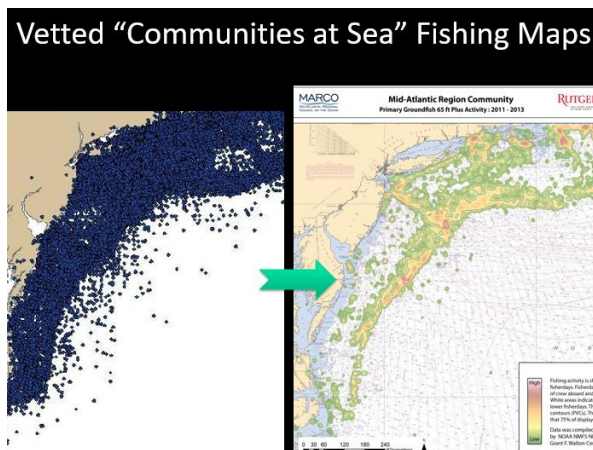
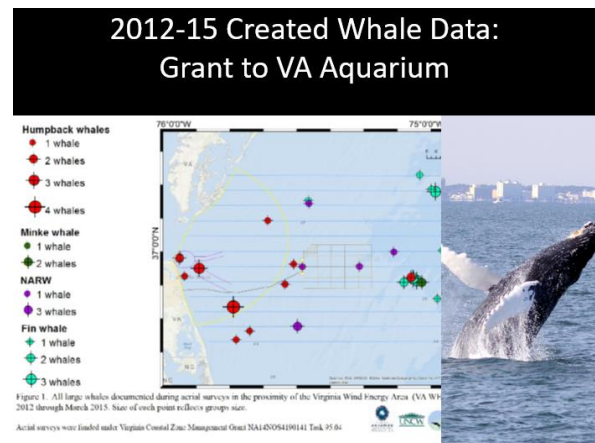
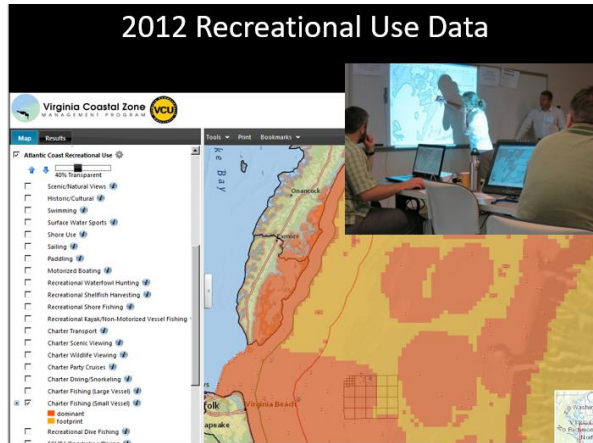
May 5-6, 2022

[2022 Ocean Forum Speakers Announced](#)

Atlantic Ocean action plan, there was at least once again, a forum for discussion. In March 2019 MACO held its first annual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum, which continues to this day.

Given the regional ocean plan did not evolve as a spatial plan and no longer requires federal implementation, a second "fix" was needed to ensure that the ocean resources and human uses of the ocean off Virginia's coast are sustainable for generations to come. Back in 2012, before the Mid-Atlantic RPB had been formed, the Virginia CZM Program created a Section 309 5-year grant strategy to develop a Virginia Ocean Plan. But as the RPB formed and work began on a regional plan, the Virginia CZM Program switched its FY2011-15 and FY2016-20 309 ocean strategies to work on the regional plan. A great deal was accomplished with those funds by way of ocean data collection on 22 recreational uses, whale distribution, vetting fishing data, leveraging funds to engage fishermen in offshore wind planning, research on

electromagnetic effects on fish, syntheses of human uses and marine life data, and development of tools to understand how fish population distribution has changed each decade since the 1970's and to understand the relative abundance of species within a particular polygon the user draws.





**2018 CZM Grant to VA Aquarium/DGIF for Mitigating hook & line impacts on sea turtles**



**2018-19 CZM Grant to The Nature Conservancy**

Created a tool that animates maps of abundance for 17 fish species over time.

**2019-20 CZM Grant to VCU in Support of GLDs for Federal Consistency Purposes**

**VIRGINIA'S COMMERCIAL FISHING: BEYOND THE BAY**  
A report on the value of Virginia's Marine Fisheries

**2019-20 CZM Grant to The Nature Conservancy**

Created a tool that allows you to draw a polygon and receive reports of marine life relative abundance in that area.

**Dominion's COP Filed Dec 2020**

2,600 MW from about 186, 14MW turbines by 2026

**MARCO MyPlanner Ocean Data Portal**

Search data

Active - 7 MyPlanner Data Legend

- Administrative
- Fishing
- Fishing - Communities at Sea (by Port)
- Marine Life
- Marine Life Library (Species Specific)
- Maritime
- Oceanography
- Recreation
- Renewable Energy
- Seafloor Habitat
- Security
- Socioeconomic
- Water Quality

**THE IMPACT:** Given all the work that has been accomplished since 2009 through:

- Virginia's Section 309 grants;
- regional efforts of MARCO and MACO;
- outstanding advances in the development of MARCO's Ocean Data Portal (which now contains 13 themes and over 6,000 maps providing far more detailed spatial data than was available in 2012); and
- the rapidly developing need for renewable offshore wind energy:

The time was right to once again attempt to develop a Virginia Ocean Plan. A plan is needed that will involve State and Federal agencies, Virginia Tribes and all stakeholders in creating a

vision for, and policies to implement, Virginia's vision of how the ocean off its shores should be managed and protected.

In 2021 the Virginia CZM Program developed a third, 5 year, Section 309 grant strategy to develop a Virginia Ocean Plan. An Ocean Planning Committee is being established that will include Virginia State agencies, Tribes, Federal agencies and academic contractors.

Initial meetings with State agencies and Tribes have resulted in a draft outline of a plan to be shared with Federal agencies in September 2022. The plan will lay out a roadmap that will address how each human use of the ocean off Virginia's coast can be made more sustainable.

The Plan outline is still in development but currently includes an introduction that covers the need for a Virginia Ocean Plan, current state of Virginia's ocean, brief history of ocean planning in Virginia and the region, description of the Ocean Planning Committee and stakeholder engagement efforts undertaken.

The second section will look at existing human uses including offshore energy (and possibly the need for port expansion areas for staging offshore wind construction and deployment, fisheries and recreation, military uses, shipping, sand mining, areas of Tribal interest and areas of general cultural/historic interest and ways to lessen or mitigate the impact to marine species and habitats and improve sustainability of those uses. Recommendations for potential new enforceable policies will be described in this section.

A third section will focus on emerging human uses such as offshore aquaculture of fish and seaweed, heavy minerals mining and ocean ecotourism. This section will emphasize Virginia's "Blue Economy" and seek to ensure that emerging uses create opportunities for Tribes and underserved communities.

A fourth section will address the changing climate. The plan will describe changes in sea temperature, ocean acidification and currents and will also address changes in species' distribution or range that result from those climatic changes.

A fifth section will describe how the plan is to be implemented, monitored and updated and include recommendations on how the ongoing effort could be funded.

Finally, there will be an Appendices section that will include the Coastal Policy Center's law students on other state ocean plans and what successes from those plans could be duplicated by Virginia. More documents will be added as the outline is further developed.

The 5 year strategy also includes development of a communications plan to ensure Virginians are kept up to date with progress on plan development and to provide opportunities for stakeholder and general public input. The plan includes schedule of meetings, fact sheets, ocean planning pages on the CZM website, e-news or Constant Contact bulletins, and public comment opportunities.

#### **MORE INFORMATION:**

To view the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal go to:

<http://midatlanticocean.org/data-portal/>

#### **CURRENT PARTNERS (soon to be expanded with more Federal agencies):**

NOAA/OCM, MARCO, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, VA Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Energy Department, Port Authority of Virginia, VA Aquarium, VA Sea Grant, College of William & Mary Coastal Policy Center, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Virginia Commonwealth University, Old Dominion University and Virginia Tribes (exact Tribes tbd).

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